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TWO BROTHERS FROM HONG KONG CHARGED IN CHINESE CONTAINER SMUGGLING SCHEME

LOS ANGELES – A federal grand jury here today handed down indictments charging two brothers from Hong Kong for masterminding the scheme to smuggle 17 Chinese nationals to Los Angeles earlier this year inside a shipping container.

Yau-Hang Chan and his younger brother Yau-Hung Chan were indicted this afternoon for conspiracy to bring aliens into the country illegally and doing so for financial gain. The smuggling scheme was uncovered February 24 after agents with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), acting on a tip, opened a hard-topped shipping container in the Port of Los Angeles and found 17 smuggled Chinese migrants inside.

ICE agents allege the Chan brothers were the so-called “snakeheads” who orchestrated the smuggling scheme, obtaining the shipping container and recruiting the smuggled aliens.

“The filing of criminal charges against these two men comes as a result of extraordinary cooperation and support ICE received from our law enforcement counterparts in Hong Kong,” said Loraine Brown, the special agent-in-charge of ICE investigations in Los Angeles. “Human smuggling is a ruthless enterprise and we’re committed to working with law enforcement agencies around the globe to identify and dismantle the criminal organizations involved.”

Two other men who traveled with the 17 Chinese migrants inside the shipping container and served as “enforcers” on the journey were convicted at trial on smuggling charges here in May. Jian Rong Tan and Wen Hsue remain in the custody of the U.S. Marshals Service and are scheduled to be sentenced October 18.

According to ICE agents, the smuggled migrants from China’s Fujian Province stated they were being charged approximately \$40,000 apiece for the trip to the United States. The men said the fee was to be paid by their families in China. In addition to food and water, the shipping container was outfitted with several car batteries that were used to power small portable fans. A small, crudely fashioned ventilation hatch had been cut in the container’s floor.

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U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), responsible for the enforcement of border, economic, infrastructure, and transportation security laws. ICE seeks to prevent acts of terrorism by targeting the people, money and materials that support terror and criminal networks.